



## Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District  
**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Shuler Votes to Raise Troop Pay, Increase Accountability, & Care for Wounded Soldiers** *Defense Department Authorization Improves Military Readiness and Provides Needed Equipment and Training*

*Washington, D.C.* – Representative Heath Shuler and the House of Representatives today voted to authorize a budget of over \$500 billion for the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2008. The National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 1585, provides full support to troops currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, while meeting immediate military requirements and ensuring the military's ability to deter and respond to future threats. Additionally, H.R. 1585 provides for a 3.5% pay raise for all members of the Armed Forces and prohibits increases in TRICARE and pharmacy user fees.

The Defense Authorization also addresses the lack of oversight and accountability over the conduct of the war in Iraq by requiring that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report every six months on the handling of contracts in Iraq and expands the authority of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction to include all reconstruction funding regardless of source or fiscal year. These measures were an integral part of H. Res. 97, of which Rep. Shuler was an original co-sponsor.

"I am extremely proud of the commitment we are making to our men and women in uniform. This blueprint for our nation's defense spending sets the right priorities and makes certain that the brave men and women serving our nation are receiving the full support they deserve," said Rep. Shuler. "This Defense Authorization also shows how much this Congress can achieve when partisan differences are put aside."

H.R. 1585 will provide \$1.2 billion for personal body armor, \$2.5 billion for up-armor Humvee production, \$1.2 billion for vehicle add-on armor, and an additional \$4.1 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles, which could reduce the casualties caused by improvised explosive devices by as much as 80 percent.

In response to the well documented equipment shortages facing our military H.R. 1585 provides \$13.6 billion to fully address equipment shortages, creates a \$1 billion Strategic Readiness Fund to give the Department of Defense the ability to rapidly address equipment shortfalls, and provides \$1 billion to the National Guard and Reserves for equipment. H.R. 1585 also establishes a Defense Readiness Production Board to identify critical readiness requirements and to mobilize the defense industrial base to speed up the production of military equipment.

Additionally, the Defense Authorization includes the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act which responds to the Walter Reed scandal by improving the care of injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. H.R. 1585 also restores more than 2300 medical personnel positions, fully funds the Defense Health program facility maintenance, creates a Military Mental Health Initiative to coordinate all mental health research and development for the Department, and establishes a Traumatic Brain Injury Initiative to provide the opportunity for emerging technologies and treatments to compete for Defense Department funding.

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